

Message Text

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SUBJ: B.P. KOIRALA STATEMENT ATTACKED

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1 EX-PRIME MINISTER KIRTNIDHI BISTA HAS ISSUED STRONG STATEMENT CONDEMNING INTERVIEW MADE MAY 27 IN GORAKHPUR B B. P. KOIRALA. KOIRALA REPORTEDLY URGED INDIA TO RESIST GROWING CHINESE INFLUENCE IN NEPAL, AND ALTHOUGH HE PROCLAIMED HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE MONARCHY, CALLED FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE GOI RESTRICTION ON POLITICAL EMIGRE ACTIVITY WITHIN 50 MILES OF THE BORDER WITH NEPAL.

2. BISTA SAID HE WAS "GRIEVED BY BASELESS AND HEINOUS CHARGE" OF PRC THREAT TO NEPAL SINCE, BASED ON HIS EXPERIENCE, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE DANGER FROM NORTH IN LIGHT OF NEPAL'S POLICY OF PEACEFUL MUTUAL COOPERATION WITH HER NEIGHBORS. BISTA HASTENED TO ADD THAT NEPAL PERCEIVED NO DANGER FROM INDIA EITHER. HE NOTED CURRENT EFFORTS TOWARD CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND SAID THAT KOIRALA CHARGES WERE PARTICULARLY DETRIMENTAL "AT AN HOUR WHEN HEALTHY ATMOSPHERE IS ABOUT TO BE CREATED."

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3. EX-CHAIRMAN OF NATIONAL PANCHAYAT LALIT CHAND ALSO CONDEMNED KOIRALA ACTION AS "HEINOUS" AND SAID THAT ANY EFFORT TO SOW DISCORD BETWEEN NEPAL'S NEIGHBORS WAS "INTOLERABLE."

4. COMMENT: INDIAN PAPERS WHICH CARRIED SUBSTANCE OF KOIRALA MAY 27 INTERVIEW WERE HELD UP BY HMG FOR TWO DAYS BUT HAVE NOW BEEN RELEASED FOR DISTRIBUTION THROUGHOUT COUNTRY. EDITORIAL REACTION HAS BEEN SLOW, PROBABLY AWAITING OFFICIAL HMG VIEWS. THESE ARE PRESUMABLY REPRESENTED BY BISTA STATEMENT (WHICH RECEIVED PROMINENT PLAY IN PRO-GOVERNMENT PAPERS). WE FULLY EXPECT EDITORIAL BROADSIDES WILL NOW APPEAR, NOT ONLY FROM PRO-CHINESE PRESS, BUT ALSO FROM BROAD SPECTRUM OF MEDIA. IT IS UNCLEAR TO US WHAT MOTIVATED B.P. TO MAKE STATEMENT AT THIS TIME, EXCEPT AS EFFORT TO SLOW DOWN HMG EFFORTS TO SMOOTH OVER BILATERAL DIFFERENCES WITH GOI. FROM INITIAL COMMENTS BY HMG OFFICIALS IT STRIKES US AS UNLIKELY THAT STATEMENT ALONE WILL HAVE THIS EFFECT, SINCE MOST POLITICAL OBSERVERS ASSUME THAT IT WAS MADE WITHOUT GOI INSTIGATION OR APPROVAL. INDEED, FACT THAT B.P.'S STATEMENT HAS BEEN CRITICIZED IN EDITORIALS IN INDIAN PRESS HAS BEEN TAKEN AS POSITIVE SIGN BY GON OFFICIALS. NO DOUBT THERE WILL BE THOSE WHO SEE B.P. AS SEMI-OFFICIAL EXPONENT OF GOI VIEWS, PARTICULARLY CRITICISM OF CHINESE ROLE. HOWEVER, ASSUMING INDIAN AND NEPALI PRESS CONTINUE RESTRAINT SHOWN IN RECENT WEEKS, WE BELIEVE THIS EXTREMEM VIWEW WILL BE SMALL MINORITY AND THAT IMPACT OF B.B.P.'S STATEMENT WILL NOT HAVE SERIOUS ADVERSE IMPACT ON INDO-NEPALESE RELATIONS. QUANTON

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